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REMARKS

ON

R. ALLSTON'S PAINTINGS.

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# REMARKS

ON

8078.160

## ALLSTON'S PAINTINGS.

BOSTON:

WILLIAM D. TICKNOR,

1839.



Dupe.

No. 1 in 8071.51

Estate of Miss E. P. Peabody.

August 20. 1894.

The few Essays here reprinted, were at first prepared only for the newspaper, with no further object in view, than to make known in a neighboring city — the fact — that there existed this rare opportunity of studying the genius of our first Artist. They are reprinted in a pamphlet, at the request of some gentlemen who think that the reverential tone in which they are written, may suggest the needed idea, that what it has cost a great artist, with all his genius, years of study to execute, should be looked at as addressing something deeper than the senses. What these pictures do suggest is indeed merely hinted; but the necessary hurry of the publication precludes any elaborate revision, and it is to be hoped they will be read with candor, and that the distinguished Artist — whom they attempt to introduce to inexperienced eyes — will pardon the inadequacy of the criticism.

YRABU OLUBU

ART TO

NOTES BY

PRESS OF I. R. BUTTS, SCHOOL STREET.



## REMARKS

ON

### ALLSTON'S PAINTINGS.

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I CANNOT describe, as you wish me to do, the Allston Exhibition, but I will say something, for I think all the newspapers should teem with it, lest some unfortunate person, from mere ignorance, should miss an opportunity of seeing pictures, which this country cannot afford again in any of our lives.— There is a false report abroad, that the exhibition is open for six months. But it was only opened for six weeks, which is indeed too short a time, even for those who begin to go now, and intend to visit it constantly while it lasts; but the period will not be extended, unless it is still thronged by new visitors.

There are between forty and fifty pictures, being nearly all Allston's works in this country, but not more than half his productions, for he was twenty years in Europe, where he left numerous, and some of his largest pictures. The mere industry displayed by such a number of exquisitely finished paintings, in which all the objects have the solidity of *things*, is stupendous. When we see how elaborately every thing is executed, we no longer wonder at the length of time this artist bestows on each picture, but we admire (all the more) their *number*. Thirty works of highest art in less than so many years! If we blush as individuals when we consider what this man has done for his country and immortality; we remember, on the other hand, that *he is ours*, and are exalted and grateful.

I will speak first of the DEAD MAN RESTORED TO LIFE. It requires a point of view quite the distance of the room, and the morning light on the picture. Then the sunshine falls on the recess where repose the prophet's bones, which, without a strong light, cannot be seen at all. A preternatural light in the skull indicates the cause of the miracle. Some persons have

made objection to this, but I see no reason to dispute the artist's judgment and taste in this particular.

The dead man is in the foreground, the base of this pyramid of awful beauty. His eyes are just opening — his right arm rising slowly, and the grandeur of unconscious life is gradually rising, but not yet quite risen into the clear sky of intelligence. Abstracting this figure from the rest of the picture by an effort of thought, we feel the sublimity of *mere life*, viewing it in relation only with the being conscious of it. But the sense of the sublimity is again deepened when we consider it, in its unconscious grandeur, in contrast with the agitated group above. Let the eye then rise slowly up among the figures that are grouped above ; and with such wonderful art, that the mere harmony of lines is a pleasure by itself, and the mere harmony of colors another pleasure. One passion pervades the whole group — fear — no longer a base, low passion, for it is the supernatural which has awakened it ; but a sensibility allying man with higher natures. This passion is seen through all its gradations in the minor groups that make up the larger one. Every figure needs to be separately studied. The man at the head shrinks from the body which he finds alive, by an impulse of bodily instinct. It is his body rather than his mind that first becomes aware of the marvellous fact. All mental movement is foreclosed. His terror is animal, infantile, and this shows the stronger in the contrast with his full grown strength. The man at the feet of the corpse is one degree less terrified. The part of the body next himself is not yet vivified, and he does not feel the fact so in his body, and therefore does not shrink from it. He is even attracted towards it, and gazes with earnestness in the midst of his terror, as if he asked — “ *is it — is it so ?* ” Some degree of imagination mingles with the terror of the two soldiers above ; and while it is less of an animal feeling, it is even heightened by the association. Yet a difference is seen in these two soldiers analogous to that of the men below. One man's terror is modified by curiosity, and he holds back the other that he may look before he rushes with him from the scene. The group of the mother and daughter next strikes the eye. A third element—that of personal affection, is supposed to struggle with terror and surprise in the wife. What can she do but faint in such a conflict ? The daughter is more affected by the fainting mother at her side, than by the reviving father in the distance. But I will not speak of this group on which I have bestowed less study than the rest. The figures higher up, though pierced with the passion that pervades the whole, are less en-

slaved. The priest has possession of his mind so far as to point to heaven. The two men to whom he speaks are carried from effects to causes by the very greatness of the effect. The opposite group, earnestly gesticulating, are communicating their ideas. The men hanging over the entrance of the cavern are all excitement, but it is all by imagination and sympathy. They know not what they are excited about. I feel as if I ought not to speak of such a marvellous whole, from only a week's study. It would take me months to satisfy myself that I had appreciated its beauty and grandeur. I know not whether it is most beautiful or grand.

I would say, let every one go and see it for himself. The sight of it will show the value of a miracle in arousing nature from its animal indolence, and gross materiality. In the sympathetic stir of our souls, we shall appreciate and worship the wisdom of that dispensation of wonders which revealed an ever present God to men, before the word was made flesh. Not a few amongst us require this preparation for the more spiritual revelation of Christ, not less than did the Jews of that early day.

These pictures of Allston's, in combination, form a great whole, which has a peculiar interest *as a whole*. — Almost all communication of one mind with others is partial. You are made aware of different departments at different times. But here, at one glance, you take in the whole of a great mind, and are rendered silent in reverence. You feel anew how great a thing one human mind is. You see how it may be a mirror of the whole race, of nature, and of something above nature. The appreciation of the supernatural, the sensibility to all that is sublime and all that is beautiful in external nature, the sympathy with all passions, from the stormiest that can agitate the firm heart of war-educated man, to the gentlest sentiment that can lift a wave in the heart of maiden childhood, all is manifested before your eyes, at once. It is a foretaste of that fullness of communication which shall take place among spirits in eternity, when there shall be no succession, because all is perfect.

But although I feel this pleasure of the whole so keenly, and prize it as one of the chief advantages of this Exhibition, I must grant that some of the pictures lose individually in not being seen alone. I feel it more especially with regard to Jeremiah. This picture represents the prophet in his dungeon cell, with no one present but the scribe Baruch, and far in the



distance the sentinels. The moment represented is the one just when the flood of inspiration (which you see, by his eye — all life and light — glazed to the outward world, and filled as it were from an inward source,) is fully upon him; but before it is committed to the imperfect organ of language. The beautiful mouth, seen through the delicate beard, is not yet unclosed, and expresses in the firm pressure of the lips, the sweet and awful dignity of that highest visible object, — a man consciously full of God. We can easily believe that when what *looks* so sublime is resolved into a Voice; it shall shrill through all coming ages.

But it requires thought and silence to raise one's soul to the pitch of this picture — for the idea of it is one that cannot seize upon the senses like that of *the Dead Man restored to Life*. It speaks not at all to the animal man, and but for the splendor of its drapery, and the gigantesque character of the figures, it would not make sufficient impression upon the senses. As the case is, however, I fear that many only dwell upon this splendid drapery, and lose the highest effect of the picture. It should be seen alone in a very large room, with a full light falling on it, while the spectator is standing in the shadow, and is uninterrupted by whatever else can affect the senses. I cannot discuss this picture without saying one word of Baruch. What can equal that look of reverence?

Miriam needs not so much preparation and such withdrawal of all phenomenal environment, in order to be felt. The inspired songstress seems to start out of hoar antiquity in all the flush of life, and her voice sounds over the dark sea of *time*, in which so many kings and warlike hosts have sunk under many waters, even as it sounded over the Red Sea and its victims, — loud, clear, triumphant. We cannot choose but *hear*. Mr. Allston is the only artist that has ever seemed to us to *paint* SOUND. — He has done it in several of these pictures, but in none more wondrously than in this. Miriam is *singing* — there can be no mistake. The reverberation of her timbrel is in our ears. The earth, the near cloud of fire and smoke, re-echo her song. It mingles its exulting sound with the low moan of the Red Sea, that darkly and gloomily, bases the ringing melody of her voice; and whose hoarse murmur is also *painted* in the back-ground.

The Witch of Endor does not interest me quite so much as the other scripture pieces. The subject is not quite sublime enough. There is here, what I have felt is a fault that Mr. Allston

escapes more than any other historical painter, a slight theatrical effect from the relative position of the three figures. But then again, what a beautiful moderation is given even to the excited face of Saul, by that kingly mouth! I do not know but that *mouth* strikes me more forcibly, as a divine touch of genius, than any single thing in any picture. Perhaps it is because it saves the whole from being something less than his pictures usually are.

These are all the Scripture pieces in this country, unless we take in the *Head of Peter*, which is a part of the great picture of the angel awaking Peter in the dungeon, that may be seen at the Abbey de la Zouch, in England. I do not know how to speak of this head. I believe Mr. Allston himself, thinks it the best thing he ever did, and superior to the one in the great picture of which it is a part.

There is one class of pictures in this Exhibition, which is wholly original. They are pictures of sentiment. Perhaps no earlier age than this could have produced them; but even in this age it has required the spirit of an old master to create the kind. Mr. Allston has succeeded in painting those states of the soul which from their very delicacy and ineffable sweetness, hover on the confines of unconsciousness. Edwin and the Italian Shepherd boy, may perhaps be included among them as the earliest examples of the class; but what is remarkable, though these were painted in the flush of youth, they are the coldest of all. Is not this fact significant? Does it not prove the true culture of the artist, that he grows warmer, and tenderer, as he grows older? And is it not cheering too, to see that the refinements of a true culture, and the austerities of the religion which has ever built its temple to protect the spring of true genius, lead him to trust more and more to the natural sentiments of the heart? When younger, he shrunk perhaps, with the religious sensitiveness of holiness, from picturing to vulgar and cold eyes, the dearest secrets of the innocent soul. But time, without robbing them of their sacredness in his eyes, has taught him that there are no secrets in heaven; — that nothing is revealed to us except to be communicated; that purity and holiness may lose nothing by being expressed; that it is the duty of those who know their nature to give it forth freely, and say, in the spirit of Him who revealed the salvation of men, *he that hath eyes to see* — LET HIM SEE.

If we follow the dates of these pictures of sentiment, we see that constantly they have become warmer, while they retain all their pristine chastity. Only a soul which has preserved its

tenderness through all the discipline of life, and has received all moral development, would be capable of this beautiful combination. One of the very last, *Rosalie*, is the most wondrous expression of sensibility I have ever known given by any art. One would think beforehand, that only music could express that susceptible moment, when the maiden, forgetful of all personality, in the fulness of feeling, is just ready to love — but has not yet thought of loving. Let me copy for you the verses which the poet-painter has put into the mouth of this fair creature, who seems something more than a vision.

“Oh pour upon my soul again  
 That sad, unearthly strain,  
 That seems from other worlds to 'plain ;  
 Thus falling, falling from afar,  
 As if some melancholy star  
 Had mingled with her light her sighs  
 And dropp'd them from the skies.

No — never came from aught below  
 This melody of woe,  
 That makes my heart to overflow  
 As from a thousand gushing springs  
 Unknown before ; — that, with it brings  
 This nameless light — if light it be —  
 That veils the world I see.

For all I see around me wears  
 The hue of other spheres :  
 And something blent of smiles and tears  
 Comes from the very air I breathe.  
 Oh! nothing sure the stars beneath  
 Can mould a sadness like to this —  
 So like angelic bliss.”

So, at that dreamy hour of day,  
 When the last lingering ray  
 Stops on the highest clouds to play —  
 So thought the gentle *Rosalie*,  
 As on her maiden reverie  
 First fell the strain of him who stole  
 In music to her soul.”

The first time I looked upon this picture was in the Artist's studio, and as I looked he repeated these lines, and it seemed



to me that the pictured form did absolutely hear his flute tones, and *therefore* so looked.

"The Evening Hymn," is conceived in the same spirit as Rosalie, and the face of the lady is not unlike. The drapery of the latter is, I find more generally pleasing to the eye than that of Rosalie, and surely nothing can be more rich; and if something is lost in the diminution of size from that of life, we are repaid by having the whole figure. The landscape which accompanies the figure, too, is in itself a treasure: those rich clouds in which the gold and dun contend for mastery and are *both* victorious: and that Italian castle! I wish we had the very song which the lady is singing. I dare say this universal artist has put it into words as well as form and color.

The Troubadour's song I have seen, but it has never been published. I think it should have been in the catalogue, for the extracts do not give a clear idea of it, I remember the general idea is this: The minstrel is sent out by the lady of the castle to meditate some music for her evening festival. For a long time his hands stray among the strings to no purpose. Then he is suddenly aroused by the fear of incurring the lady's displeasure if he does not do her bidding. Her image strikes the right chord, and a song in praise of her loveliness comes. It is the moment of success — the joy of creation — which has kindled his features.

I will speak of still another picture of music. It is Jessica and Lorenzo listening.

Taking the lines of Shakspeare out of the play, and disconnecting them from the whole action of the characters, nothing could better express the sentiment of them than these two figures. Lorenzo looks, as he is, perfectly content, and without a farther wish. His hopes have become fruition. His attitude expresses the *abandon* of his feelings. He lifts his finger to point at the moonlight — so gently — as if he hardly needed to take heed of the beauties of nature, — so complete is he within himself, in his identification with Jessica. The music harmonizes with his mood — but does not elevate it — for there is no need. Already he is at the height of his happiness.

Not so Jessica. She is a woman — and by virtue of the feminine soul, has a fearful sensibility to the unknown future. The music touches her imagination and awakens that melancholy, which is the heart's sigh after the omniscience we need for perfect happiness — but which we have not. What beauty

there is in that pensive bend of the neck ! How exquisitely formed is the head ! How delicate the temple ! — The night breeze is so gentle it does not disturb her ringlets — though it lifts the light feather of Lorenzo's cap. The sky is still bright with the twilight ; and how bright — soft — dewy — and evanescent is the moonlight bank on which they are sitting ! Which is the most beautiful landscape — that of the Evening Hymn — that of the Troubadour — or this ? I believe the stone Cupid of the Troubadour's Ravine bears away the palm. But it is of no consequence which is the *most* beautiful. Glory to the genius which has created three such lovely spots, in each of which so much is concentrated, that if we do not believe ourselves we see all nature, we cease to ask to see more — for we *feel* all.

But a word more of Jessica and Lorenzo. This Jessica of Allston's is as much of a creation as if he had not borrowed *the situation* from Shakspeare. *This* queenly Jessica never stole her father's ducats, nor dressed up in boy's clothes (even with a misgiving) to jump out of a window and run away. She is superior to all that. This Jessica, I am sure, was not easily *won*, but required the support of all favoring circumstances, ere she was persuaded to descend from the vestal altar to watch a household fire. Lorenzo is hardly aware of what good luck has been his — and yet he loves her as much as he can ; he gives his whole heart, and what loftiest lady requires more than that ? With this argument he would dismiss the subject, did it occur to him ; but there is no mystery in him — he is lovely-tempered — and true-hearted — and his happy quietness of temperament makes an excellent match of it.

More easily won, and yet no less of a prize *to cherish a household fire*, is the fair lady reading the valentine ? How delicately is her interest expressed. It is the faintest, most delicate shade of interest, — the first faint gleam, perhaps of the sentiment which in no distant day shall kindle her gentle nature into a lambent flame — that shall burn like the sacred fire of old — without consuming.

There is a touch of art in this picture which is truly Allstonian, — it is the shadow cast across the lip which chastens even that gentle smile, and gives a new security to "the modest charm of *not too much*." The painting of this picture seems to me eminently excellent. That brilliant complexion which accompanies the auburn hair is surpassingly beautiful. — Indeed there is something altogether peculiar, (in this country — to say the least) in Allston's painting of flesh. It always seems

to be alive. He does not merely paint the surface — but he *implies the depth* of the flesh. — It is said that the external skin is transparent ; and he succeeds in making this transparency by making the reflecting surface below this external transparent surface. So there is none of that hard earthy appearance which annoys the eye in most of our paintings of flesh. Look at the beautiful hands of this lady — and what a homebred charm there is in that close New England dress ! If Milton is the poet — Allston is the painter of chastity, — and even more ; for he unites the “ terrible virtue ” of the lady in *Comus* with the tenderness of Coleridge’s *Genevieve*, and the simplicity and truthfulness of Wordsworth’s

“ Perfect woman, nobly plann’d  
To warn, and comfort and command.”

who grows in the discipline of human life, out of the phantom of delight

“ With eyes like stars of twilight fair,  
Like twilight too her dusky hair,  
But all things else about her drawn  
From Maytime and the dewy morn.”

One characteristic of Allston’s painting, which sets him immeasurably above the generality of modern artists is the *solidity* of all his objects. He does not paint the surfaces of things, but the things themselves. The mass of paint upon his canvass is immense. This is one great reason why he is so long in painting a picture. But the solidity of his painting is no whim, nor accident. It is done on a principle. The effects of nature are produced by combination. Light is reflected and refracted over and over again, from object to object, and thus colors are mingled : and there are associations of ideas also, which sometimes carry the tint of one object upon another ; and Mr. Allston seems to study out all these things, and paints, as it were, the whole process of nature ; the last link of the chain of operation being the outward layer of his covering.†

I once heard him analyze to another artist the painting of the *Two Sisters*, which he executed I believe in Italy, when he was particularly studying Titian. An artist ought to speak of this picture, and so I shall not attempt to do it, except that I must say that I like especially the girl, whose back is towards us. We see but little of the earnest face, but we know exactly



how she looks. Mr. Coleridge, who was a great admirer of this picture, made a story to it, — which one would like to see in the catalogue.

The Roman lady is a splendid painting, but has not to me the poetical interest of the other ideal portraits. But there is a fire and glow of life in Isaac of York, which hangs near, that seizes on something deeper than my eye. The anxious eyes and mouth, and a certain want of inward repose, are well suited to the character. The sketches of the Polish Jews, whose force and artistical beauty I see, yield me nothing to say however *here*, which argues, I doubt not, my want of cultivation. These are portraits, it is said; and with that of Mr. Samuel Williams, Mr. Benjamin West, and the late Mrs. Channing, prove that Mr. Allston can paint portraits. It is said that he painted Mrs. Channing in one day, but that I think impossible. It is a very striking likeness and what is remarkable, bears a resemblance to her son, (Rev. Dr. C.) which could not be discerned so clearly in her living features.

People sometimes express wonder why Mr. Allston does not devote himself more to portrait painting, because it is so much the more profitable branch of the art; but any man who can sit in the midst of these ideal pictures — and wonder why he who has such visions of the unfallen does not paint the *fallen* images of God, which are around us in actual life — is a Goth with whom I for one will not condescend to argue. It is a blessed fact that genius is naturally disinterested; that it does not calculate profit and loss — but yields itself unreservedly to the guidance of beauty, and follows — sacrificing — wherever the divine idea leads. Wo to him who blasphemes the religion of the arts! The petulance of the narrow minded is soon lost in the small sphere to which *noise* extends — but the embodiments of the Ideal go up into the Eternal Silence — pure tones of the music of the spheres.

Speaking of the portraits, I must pause one moment before that of the artist. It is a sweet picture, but I know not whether it ever looked like him. If it did, the change that has taken place is a proof of the doctrine of Dr. Spurzheim, that developments of mind and character actually alter the formation of the skull. The present forehead of Allston is higher and broader, and all the formation about the eyes and eyebrows is expanded. His mouth has added to that look of delicacy, a certain maturity of wisdom. Altogether his present aspect is very much freer — more open — more commanding. He looks perhaps more as he will look when his mortal

leaf "withers on the tree of life," and his spirit shall entirely determine his aspect.

The little space I have left of my paper I will devote to Florimel, to *me* the most heart-touching denizen of Faerie Land. As the principle of which she is so exquisite an emblem, exists nowhere in nature, save in *human* nature, her story has a human interest about it.

"All suddenly out of the thickest brush,  
Upon a milk-white palfrey all alone,  
A goodly Lady did foreby them rush,  
Whose face did seeme as cleare as christall stone,  
And eke, through fear, as white as whale's bone :  
Her garments all were wrought of beaten gold,  
And all her steed with tinsel trappings shone,  
Which fled so fast that nothing might him hold,  
And scarce them leisure gave her passing to behold.  
Still, as she fled, her eye she backward threw,  
As fearing evil that pursued her fast ;  
And her fair yellow locks behind her flew  
Loosely dispersed with puff of every blast ;  
All as a blazing star doth far outcast  
His hairy beams and flowing locks disspread.

[*Faerie Queene, Book III, Canto I.*]

How well has Allston represented, by the convulsive grasp with which she holds the reins, and the wild abandoned attitude, and the tired steed's long leap, *the infinite fright of delicacy*, which once alarmed by incomprehensible rudeness, carries her headlong through the wild wood of earthly passions ; away from the very protection she craves, into the valley of suspicion ; rouses the blatant beast of evil report ; hurries her unadvisedly into the barque of danger, that rides rudderless on the multitudinous waves of life, and may find no rest or soothing, save in heaven above, or *heaven below*.

Poor, hunted, flying, sweet Florimel ! whose very name\* importeth thy nature ! How can we sufficiently thank the artist who has seized thee on the wing, and holds thee by his Prospero wand, that all may gaze oh ! wondrous stroke of art — upon

"The light that never was on sea or land,  
The Consecration, and the Poet's dream !"

I wish we had the exact chronology of these pictures. Then the gallery would be a complete psychological autobiography.

\* The honey of flowers.

But I have some idea of it. Florimel was one of the earliest of Allston's female forms. The painter of chastity begins with the hapless plight of delicacy amidst the rudeness of the world. But it is a faerie who embodies the easily wounded, ever fleeting charm. Is not this characteristic? The reverential soul first approaches the object of its devout worship, veiled in allegory. In the true spirit of chivalry it would prove its truth and prowess in distant tournaments, before it hopes to

“ View with eye serene  
The very pulse of the machine.”

But this is the next stage of spiritual progress. We see it in *Beatrice*, which was, as I suppose, the next production after Florimel. This is indeed

“ A being breathing *thoughtful* breath,  
A traveller betwixt life and *death*,  
A *perfect* woman — nobly plann'd  
To warn to comfort and *command*,  
And yet a *spirit too*, and bright  
With something of an *angel* light.”

I have not put off the consideration of this picture so long because it is to me the least interesting of his delineations of sentiment, but truly because it is the most so. It was the first revelation to me of Allston's genius, when exhibited at the Athenæum Gallery in 1826. I used to go and sit before it day after day, and it unlocked streams of thought and feeling, which, as unuttered presentiment, had burdened me before. I felt in it the power of genius to unfold the soul's treasures to itself. I sometimes went away from it murmuring, “ Oh, tell me no more ; ” but returned to it the next day, impelled by an irresistible attraction. I remember there were two parties on the subject of this picture, one of which professed not to understand its meaning, or rather denied that it expressed any thing spiritual ; while the other party thought they saw in it all that was most lovely in mortal woman, together with a *presentiment*, as it were, of all that Dante had represented in his *Beatrice*, when in celestial wisdom, she guided him through the circles of the heavens, unfolding to him the highest truths that pertain to the regenerating soul, and growing more beautiful constantly to his eyes — *as they became more purged*. Soft, as if she had no will of her own — nor wished to have, she bends a pensive



look upon her lover. But though his passionate affection dissolves her heart, and his wondrous genius satisfies her imagination, and *by all that* he is hers — she feels that to the highest within her there is something wanting: — her holiness is not all satisfied, for, as he himself confesses in the opening of the *Inferno*, he is

—— “Midway of this our mortal life —  
 ————— in a gloomy wood astray,  
 Gone from the path direct: and e’en to tell,  
 It were no easy task, how savage wild  
 That forest, how robust and rough its growth.”

This is the very Beatrice of Dante: — celestial wisdom embodied in nature’s masterpiece. I remember the other party used to say that there was a want of intellectual expression in her face, — but to me she seems to express the very intellect of woman in distinction from that of man. — I mean that intuitive intelligence of the essences of things, which is evolved from a moral nature that has never been enfeebled by frivolity, rather than the understanding which is formed by the reaction of external things. Her soft fair brow — her delicately pencilled eyebrow and gentle eyelids, express, it is true, no masculine acumen to analyze the things of this world, — but her twilight eyes have a look that reaches the things *signified* by all earthly forms, which she feels to be in union with the spirit that gives her life; while the touch of melancholy in the sweet mouth, which is however more sympathetic than sorrowful, expresses with no less power, that the fine chords of her spirit are jarred on by what is still *unredeemed* in the beautiful but stormy soul of the object of her love.

And let every woman come, and in that meek and docile spirit of humility, with which the works of genius ought ever to be studied, (more especially when their object is to express the holiest,) sit down before this lovely form, and she shall learn that this love, which regards the moral welfare of its object even more than his present gratification, is also in her own soul — and is her highest duty and destiny. In its utmost stage of development it may not often be actually found on earth, but it is something to *see* that the sweetest sentiment of nature involves it all — and sometimes may be so unfolded even here. It always must be, certainly, when its consummation and enjoyment are thrown by Providence, as in the instance of Beatrice, beyond the grave.

Oh happy artist! to whom it is given to throw over the sor-

rows and shadows of earth a ray so celestial — to breathe upon the cold atmosphere of earthly disappointment a consolation so divinely tender, so sweetly elevating — as is this pictured form of Beatrice!

Florimel and Beatrice were the first of Allston's female forms, and they involve the most. This is all right. The mind *generalizes* at first. It goes to the extent of its reach by an irresistible impulse. The whole is always grasped at by genius, before the details are appreciated. After this far flight has once been made, the mind returns upon its track, and dwells, with loving, conscious power on all that it has ascertained to be within its circle. Thus we see statesmen who have been most interested in wide views of men and wide relations with them, and metaphysicians who have gone to the boundaries of thought on the subject of Being, return, in their old age, to give themselves up to cultivating the earth and loving little children.

And so Allston descends from the idea of womanliness in Florimel, and the apotheosis of woman in Beatrice, to paint Jessica, and Rosalie, and other sweet individualities of nature.

But I miss one picture which belongs to this class; and I cannot conceive why it should not be in this collection, as it is no farther off than Northampton, and the conveyance thence is so secure. Can it not even now be procured? I mean the Castilian maiden. She exhibits another stage of love — more developed than that of the lady reading the Valentine, or than that of Rosalie — but not so far consummated as that of Jessica. She is sitting on the most beautiful of all Allston's banks, and a sort of ravine surrounds her, covered with the softest foliage, among which you see and *hear* a sweet little cascade falling into a stream whose quiet tune it hardly disturbs. On this bank the lady first heard love made to her; — and afterwards parted there from her lover as he went to the wars. She has gone there to meditate on these things, and all the past comes back upon her. This we may see in her expression, — it is that of sweetest reminiscence. But Allston accompanied its first exhibition with the following ballad — that there might be no mistake. We take it from the *North American Review* for October, 1831, where is a beautiful criticism on this picture from the pen of Mr. Franklin Dexter.

“ Five weary months sweet Inez numbered  
From that unfading bitter day,  
When last she heard the trumpet bray

That called her Isidor away —  
That never to her heart has slumbered ;

She hears it now, and sees, far bending  
Along the mountain's misty side,  
His plumed troop, that waving wide,  
Seems like a rippling feathery tide,  
Now bright, now with the dim shore blending.

She hears the cannon's deadly rattle —  
And fancy hurries on to strife,  
And hears the drum and screaming fife  
Mix with the last sad cry of life.  
Oh, should he — should he fall in battle !

Yet still his *name* would live in story,  
And every gallant bard in Spain  
Would fight his battles o'er again ;  
And would not she for such a strain  
Resign him to his country's glory ?

Thus Inez thought, and plucked the flower  
That grew upon the very bank,  
Where first her ear bewildered drank  
The plighted vow — where last she sank  
In that too bitter parting hour.

But now the sun is westward sinking ;  
And soon amid the purple haze,  
That showers from his slanting rays,  
A thousand Loves there meet her gaze  
To change her high heroic thinking.

Then Hope with all its crowd of fancies,  
Before her flits and fills the air ;  
And, decked in victory's glorious gear  
In vision Isidor is there.  
*Then* how her heart mid sadness dances !

Yet little thought she, thus forestalling  
The coming joy, that in *that* hour  
The Future, like the colored shower  
That seems to arch the ocean o'er,  
Was in the living Present falling.

The foe is slain. His sable charger  
 All flecked with foam comes bounding on ;  
 The wild morena rings anon,  
 And on its brow the gallant Don  
 And gallant steed grow larger, larger ;

And now he nears the mountain hollow ;  
 The flowery bank and little lake  
 Now on his startled vision break —  
 And Inez there ! — He 's not awake ! —  
 Yet how he 'll love this dream tomorrow.

But no — he surely is not dreaming,  
 Another minute makes it clear.  
 A scream, a rush, a burning tear  
 From Inez cheek, dispel the fear  
 That bliss like his is only seeming."

But to return to the gallery, and the pictures which are now in it. How different is the marble purity of childhood from the conscious, and therefore trembling, sorrow-touched purity of early womanhood, we may see, by comparing the Tuscan Girl with the other female forms of which I have spoken.

Not a sigh of presentiment has yet disturbed "the Being of the Eternal silence ;" — not a wave of passion broken into the calm of "that immortal sea which bore her hither." Though external nature is beginning to react upon her, she is still almost a "statue of the soul." Witness that broad fair brow — those eyes — that mouth ! But let Allston himself tell her story.

"How pleasant and how sad the turning tide  
 Of Human life, when — side by side —  
 The child and youth begin to glide  
 Along the vale of years ;  
 The pure twin being for a little space  
 With lightsome heart, and yet a graver face,  
 Too young for wo, though not for tears.

This turning tide is Ursulina's now ; —  
 The time is marked upon her brow ; —  
 Now every thought and feeling throw  
 Their shadows on her face ;  
 And so, are every thought and feeling joined,  
 'T were hard to answer, whether heart or mind  
 Of either were the dwelling-place.



The things that once she loved are still the same ;  
 Yet now there needs another name  
 To give the feeling that they claim,  
     While *she* the feeling gives :  
 She cannot call it gladness or delight,  
 And yet there seems a richer, lovelier light  
     On e'en the humblest thing that lives.

She sees the mottled moth come twinkling by,  
 And sees it sip the flow'ret nigh ;  
 Yet not, as once, with eager cry  
     She grasps the pretty thing ;  
 Her *thoughts* now mingle with its tranquil mood,  
 So poised on air, — as if on air it stood  
     To show its gold and purple wing.

She hears the bird without a wish to snare,  
 But rather — on the azure air  
 To mount, and with it wander there  
     To some untrodden land ;  
 — As if it told her in its happy song  
 Of pleasures strange that never can belong  
     To aught of sight, or touch of hand.

Now the young soul her mighty power shall prove,  
 And, outward things around her move,  
 — Pure ministers of purer love —  
     And make her heart her home ;  
 Or, to the meaner senses sink a slave  
 To do their bidding, tho' they madly crave  
     Through hateful scenes of vice to roam.

But, Ursulina, thine the better choice,  
 Thine eyes so speak as with a voice ;  
 Thy heart may still in earth rejoice  
     And all its beauty love ;  
 But no — not all this fair enchanting earth,  
 With all its spells, can give the rapture birth  
     That waits thy conscious soul above."

What a beautiful picture is this of the mother and child !  
 and yet that stately lady is almost too angel fair for her years  
 and matronly station. Were she not so very delicate, she  
 might represent Volumnia, or Cornelia : but that fairness we  
 can believe only to be preserved so tender and so lofty in the

christian home ; where first the mother has been worshipped. I must, however tell you of a criticism I heard made upon her, by a lady, who resembles her not a little in dignity and loveliness. She said the attitude was not of sufficient tenderness. A real mother, said she, would naturally be nearer, and have her infant more immediately in her arms, — or at least be bending over it. As this critic was not a vulgar one, and is remarkable for the strength and liveliness of the maternal sentiment, I could not gainsay her authority. There is the same defect in another mother and child, which Allston painted, and which belongs to the Atheneum, and ought to be in this collection. (I cannot imagine why it is not.) The way in which the child is held seems to imply want of tenderness. But the mother in that is also very beautiful. She is younger than this mother ; with a temple and brow that might have suited Eve, and the sweetest auburn hair tied up with artless grace. The baby in this picture is more beautiful than the one in the Atheneum picture. — But they neither of them come up to many *actual* babies.

There is not a more magnificent painting in the room than the scene from *Gil Blas*. Its rich depth of coloring makes it look like an *old* master. But the greatness which I can best speak of, is in the intensity of the scene. What unity of interest ! What a living repose ! What beauty in those features of the lady, pallid and disturbed as they are ! — It is the majesty of distress. The wife is coming back to the realization of a pain that displaces terror. The effect of her beauty is heightened by the contrast with that old hag. And *Gil Blas* — the sympathy of human nature has not yet departed from his handsome features.

There is another picture from romantic literature, which is owned in South Carolina, that is worthy to be a companion piece to this. It is the scene from Mrs. Radcliffe's "*Italian*," where Schedoni and Spalatro are going to the murder of Emilia. The painting is in the same deep rich style of coloring as this. And the scene has even a higher moral interest. Spalatro (an ignorant, hired assassin,) has become frightened at his own shadow — seen unexpectedly. Schedoni has taken the lamp from him, and with firm determined step proceeds himself to do the deed. The contrast between the supernatural terror of Spalatro, and the tremendous will of Schedoni is wonderful. And the imagination makes another contrast still, of both, with the moral Ideal.

There are two comic pictures in this collection. But I do

not enjoy comic pictures so much. The evanescent nature of comedy seems to me better suited to outline drawing than to the elaborate vehicle of Painting. But I think very like I am am wrong. It is not in favor of my opinion that Allston differs from me; and certainly it might be expected that my sympathy and understanding should fail to measure the whole ground of so great a genius. Falstaff never seems to me so funny when I absolutely see his fat broad face, as when I only have his words in my mind. Of these two pictures I like the author and rich bookseller, the best. It is indeed more pathetic than comic, and yet too comic to give you the full pleasure of the pathetic. But I will leave these pictures for some one more able to understand and appreciate them, than I am.

And now I have spoken of all but the landscapes — and there is a whole world in each of these. To borrow the words of an unpublished poet, written with reference to the landscape No. 11.

“ Say if Fancy  
 Ever conjured up softer and lovelier forms  
 Than smile so gracefully from that lofty tree,  
 Those resting figures, that distant sea,  
 That castle half hidden, the melting water,  
 The pure pale blue of the distant hill,  
 And the fleecy clouds, and the warm effulgence —  
 Oh! this is too fair for reality and earth!

Yes, 'tis too fair, — yet not the less  
 Does this also belong to the spirit of man.  
 Here is the peace which passeth understanding,  
 Which earth hath not given, nor can take away.  
 Never can it be met in entireness below,  
 But faith and hope in the true soul  
 Can inspire the mind and hand of the artist,  
 Till it rises, a living reality, before us.”

{It is upon purely natural objects that the re action of the mind of the artist is most clearly displayed;} and if there is less to excite associations of human sentiment in Allston's landscapes, than in his pictures of human beings, there is all the more to be learnt of the general laws of his mind. It seems to me I never saw such triumphs of individual genius as in the subduing of that “Southwest haze,” No. 19, and still more of that magnificent “Scene on the Mediterranean,” No. 27, to the *Allstonian* tone. ^ In the “Southwest haze,” the all-

surrounding atmosphere, when it has become visible by the rose tint of a June sun, a palpable mantle threatening to preclude thought by dazzling our senses, is quietly gathered up by the master mind to fall as a mere drapery around his own great Idea, which shines through it ; — and, in the “ scene on the Mediterranean,” looking the sun itself in the face, he commands him to vail his proud beams and acknowledge a master. External nature seems here to put on a moral glory, and to conquer by yielding : to obey the law of *melior natura* with a grateful love. Would that we might all learn thus gracefully and adoringly to obey what we cannot resist ! I never saw any pictures which gave me such a sense of the severe and stern virtue of the artist as Allston’s landscapes.

“ There seems to me the sublimity of self-denial in putting that sweet scene of the “ Moonlight ” picture No. 24, so much into shadow. And it gives me too a feeling that the artist is richer than nature herself or he could not afford to do it : and must not the mind of man, which is to rise beyond this earth, *be richer in power* than nature is in manifestation ? This reminds me of a conversation I had yesterday, as I was sitting before the Alpine scene. I remarked to a friend at my side that this was the only picture of Allston’s which had become in my memory more brilliant. I saw it before when it was exhibited at the Atheneum, and it struck my imagination very much, and always, in remembering it I had had an image of an immense range of mountain summits extending far into the distance, and in a warmer light ; while I had entirely forgotten those classic figures in the foreground. My friend replied, by asking if I did not see in these pictures, by an operation of my own imagination, what other eyes could not see, and what Allston himself never intended. Not more than Allston intended I should see, said I ; because he did intend to suggest all Switzerland to my imagination. My friend did not realize how high was the compliment that he paid to Allston, when he suggested that my imagination could see in his works more than the eyes discern. It is precisely the proof of the highest artist that he suggests more than he expresses ; that he touches the imagination. The highest art does more than give us a fac simile of a piece of nature ; it selects and combines natural objects under the inspiration of a sentiment or Idea, so that the whole is suggested by the miniature. It is the very proof of the truth as well as ideality of this picture of a single Alp, that it opens to my inward eye the whole of the Alpine scenery. I had not made out the melody, had not the octaves



been truly touched. I never fear by surrendering myself generously to a work of genius and ascribing frankly all that I am reminded of by it to the genius that produced it I shall do more than justice. It is the same noncommittal spirit which resists the spiritual significance of events and of the forms of nature, lest it should prove itself too credulous, which defends itself against the electric touch of genius, and so is never kindled with etherial fire, but even bereaved of natural life.

The great landscape painter affects us precisely in proportion as he excites our imagination to banish our little peculiarities and see nature with *his* associations of thought and feeling. Doubtless Allston's landscapes — perfect in execution as they are, are rivalled by those of other great masters. But to us they have an interest all their own, from expressing the mind of a master of our own era, and perhaps the only living master. Certainly in this country, and (as I understand from the best judges who have been in Europe,) even abroad no living landscape painter can be compared with him.

We may trace the same progress of Allston's mind in these landscapes, that we traced in his delineations of humanity. Beginning with the *material* truth of that cold cluster of objects in No. 36, we come to the stiff Italian City, No. 13, which is positively not Allstonian. Then comes a higher strain : the rising of the thunder storm at sea, and those clear, brilliant landscapes, Nos. 21 and 25. (In these three pieces, whose exquisite finish in every detail makes them the finest models for young artists to copy — the mind of the artist has harmonized, but not yet dissolved nature. They are indeed wholes, but they show that he still stood off and looked at nature as a spectator. We see the same *objectiveness* in that beautiful wood through which Florimel flies; and in the rich scenery on which Edwin is gazing; while in the landscapes that surround the later figures, the minds of the represented beings seem to diffuse their own sentiment over every thing they see. But it is in the warm, golden light over the landscape No. 18, that we are made fully sensible that he has drawn close to himself the beloved nature of which he has so long stood in awe — and melted it in the fire of his own bosom. Another advance is made in those three landscapes : the "Sweet Evening," No. 16; the brilliant, yet soft "Afternoon," No. 11, and the holy "Moonlight," No. 24. Here we see that the artist has discovered and said to himself, "Yes, it was *my* love which created nature — and I may use it forevermore — to speak my inmost thought of

Beauty; and now let me carry all men with me into the region of 'perfect good and fair.' "

I have heard people say that it seemed to them that trees had minds, and communed together on mystic themes. There is certainly no doubt that the trees in No. 16 have minds, and communicate ideas and feelings, not merely to one another, but to the dreamer at their feet and to us. And does not that single tree in No. 11 clap its hands in the sunshine, rejoicing in itself so much, that we are content it should stand "alone in its glory?" How delicate, feathery, and moist is the foliage in all these landscapes; how soft and velvety the green swards; how rich the red brown earth; what delicious dark air breathes under the transparent shadows! Without losing their solid palpable existence to the senses, they seem drawn on the mind itself — not on perishable canvas. And indeed they are of those views of nature, which, incorporated into our spiritual being, shall bloom perennial, when "the heavens and earth shall *have passed* away like a scroll that is rolled together."

When I look at these three last pictures especially, and vainly strive

"from outward forms to win

The beauty and the joy whose fountains are within,"

it soothes me to believe that my sympathy with their all pervading harmony and peace, is a prophecy and pledge of an ineffable enjoyment in reserve for the purified spirit. It consoles me to believe that in Heaven I shall look back on this fair earth and see it thus; and what a blessed feeling is it, that such seeing is possible on earth! Let us thank Heaven who has given to genius to dissolve the spell of the curse which sin lays upon the outward world, and give us a glimpse of Paradise. A preacher might make many a sermon on the christian graces of Love and Peace, and yet be perturbed within, and fail to convince his hearers that such things *are*. But here is their manifestation. Here — (and they are the emanations of a human soul, yet subject to the disturbing forces of this world,) ARE Love and Peace. Here — by the identification of the beauty and the joy "whose sources are within," with all outward things, the words of a contemporary of kindred imagination are illustrated: "The aspect of nature is devout. Like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from her the lesson of worship."

# LIFE AND GENIUS OF ALLSTON.

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WASHINGTON ALLSTON, endowed by nature and education with every advantage, has added to these gifts that which alone can give to any one a place in the poetic school of Art. This is — a holy life ; flowing on the one hand from a deep sensibility to religion, considered as the purifier of the soul, on the other from a severe and uncompromising self-restraint as to every questionable indulgence, — so that with pure eyes and heart he may look on Nature and Man as the expression of the Divine Heart. This is not merely the declamation of panegyric. The memoirs of his life bear it out ; for, indeed, in looking over them we might almost fancy it an ideal biography. At five or six years of age, when, to use the words of another, “less intellectual children are content in their plays to make mud-pies, and form ovens with clay, and clam-shells to bake them in ;” for, “even at play, they are haunted by the ghosts of cakes, pies, and puddings ;” the favorite amusement of the embryo artist, as he has himself acknowledged, was in making little landscapes about the roots of an old tree in the country, such as a cottage built of little sticks, shaded by little trees composed of small suckers gathered in the woods ; or in converting the forked stalks of the wild ferns into little men and women, by winding about them different colored yarns, and then throwing a charm of fancy over them by presenting them with pitchers made of the pomegranate flower ; or last, not least, in listening to wild and marvellous tales of witches and hags that the slaves of his native state had connected with the wild places of the Carolina woods. “One of my favorite haunts, when a child in Carolina,” he writes in a letter to a friend, “was a forest spring where I used to catch minnows, and, I dare say, with all the callousness of a fisherman. At this moment I can see that spring, and the pleasant conjuror Memory has brought again those little creatures before me, — but how unlike to what they were ! They seem to me now like the spirits of the woods, which a flash from their little diamond eyes lights up afresh in all their gorgeous garniture of leaves and flowers. But where am I going ?” — We reply, — where we

willingly follow the child of Inspiration; for it is by such leading alone, that

“Our souls have sight of that immortal Sea  
Which brought us hither;  
Can in a moment travel thither  
And see the children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

From the *darkly shadowed* brilliancies of a Carolina climate, the young artist was removed, at the early age of seven, to the beautiful State of Rhode Island; whose ocean-magnificence and gentle inland beauty have nourished the early heart of some of the greatest ornaments of our land; Stuart the portrait painter, who drew the soul on his canvas, and only reminds the spectator of the mortal vestment; — Malbone the miniature, painter, in whose hands, as Allston has himself said, the “fair become still fairer,” the poet Dana; and Channing, the master of English composition, who has sent a new soul into the dry bones of old Theology, doing for the American Church a work of the same nature as his youthful companions have done for their respective arts — the work of spiritualizing all they have touched.

Here Allston made painting his recreation from school studies; afterwards his passionate creations shed light over his college life; and then, he returned to his native State, only to turn all his worldly goods into the means of following the vocation to which Heaven had called him. Spared from those early struggles with circumstances, which he did not need in order to be rendered pure, docile, unworldly, and reverential to Nature and God; he pursued his education in England and on the Continent, in intimate communication with the loftiest men of the age, and in patient, self-forgetting labor, without any discipline of suffering, save that sublime one of Love and Death, which brings a man into closer communion with all that is beyond the region of circumstance, and lays him low before nothing less than the throne of God.

Of this happy youth, he says in a letter to a friend: — “With youth, health, the kindest friends, and ever before me buoyant hope, what a time to look back on! I cannot but think that the life of an artist, whether painter or poet, depends much on a happy youth; I do not mean as to outward circumstances, but as to his inward being. In my own case, at least, I feel the dependence; for I seldom step into the ideal world but I find myself going back to the age of first impressions. The germs of our best thoughts are certainly often to be found there; sometimes, indeed, (though rarely,) we find them in full flower; and when so, how beautiful seem to us these flowers, through an atmosphere of thirty years! ’Tis in this way that poets and painters keep their minds young. How else could an old man make the page of the canvas palpitate with the hopes, and fears, and joys, the impetuous, impassioned emotions of youthful lovers or reckless heroes? There is a period of life when the ocean of time seems to force upon the mind a barrier against itself, forming as it were, a permanent breach, on which the advancing years successively break, only to be carried back by a returning current to that furthest deep whence they first flowed. Upon this beach the *poetry of life* may be said first to have its birth; where the *real* ends and the *ideal* begins.”

In another letter he says; —

“Next to my own country, I love England, the land of my ancestors. I should, indeed be ungrateful if I did not love a country from which I



never received other than kindness ; in which, during the late war, I was never made to feel that I was a foreigner. By the English artists, among whom I number some of my most valued friends, I was uniformly treated with openness and liberality. Out of the art, too I found many fast and generous friends ; and here, though I record a compliment to myself, I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of repeating the kind words of Lord Egremont a few weeks before I left England : — ‘ I hear you are going to America,’ he said ; ‘ I am very sorry for it. Well, if you do not meet with the encouragement you deserve in your own country, we shall be very glad to see you back again.’ This munificent nobleman had done me the honor to introduce himself to me ; and is the possessor of one of my best pictures, ‘ Jacob’s Dream.’” Notwithstanding all this, however, he writes farther on — “ A home-sickness which (in spite of some of the best and kindest friends, and every encouragement that I could wish as an artist,) I could not overcome, brought me back to my own country in 1818. We made Boston harbor in a clear evening in October. It was an evening to remember ! The wind fell and left our ship almost stationary on a long low swell, as smooth as glass, and undulating under one of our gorgeous autumnal skies, like a prairie of amber. The moon looked down upon us like a living thing, as if to bid us welcome. I had returned to a mighty empire ; I was on the very waters which the gallant Constitution had first broken — whose building I saw when at college, and whose ‘ slaughter-breaking brass,’ to use a quotation from worthy Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia*, *but now* ‘grew hot, and spoke *her name* among the nations !’ This patriotic feeling is not a strange thing for which any credit is claimed ; it would have been discreditable to have been without it.”

“ The American Titian,” as the Italian artists call Allston, therefore returned from the galleries of foreign art, to commune, in his native home, with Nature and himself, in the true spirit of Michael Angelo. And here, in the retreat which he has chosen, if some untoward circumstances have intruded, boldly attempting to obscure the orb of his glory, as it throws its westerling rays over his country, they receive the answer which the clouds receive from the setting sun. Every one of them is but a new prism to separate, and make individually visible to grosser eyes, the elements of his light. The genius which in its noon, called down Uriel from his palace of Light, wrapped in the “ Efflux divine,” and unfolded the heavenly dream-land of Jacob to the eyes of all the world ; and waked Peter in his dungeon to look upon the sky-robed angel — is no less glorious although broken by obstruction.

“ He who would make a true poet,” said Milton, “ must be in himself an heroic poem.” Allston verifies this sentence. He is tested as a true artist in other ways than by those works which, though irradiated with spirit, are wrought from clay. Circumstances find in him no element inconsistent with the effect of the whole. In ill health, and the poverty which is new to him, and annoying, in proportion both as he loves independence, shrinks from patronage, and is inclined to advert little to outward things ; sequestered from social excitement, and keeping industrious every day, he is still the enthusiastic artist, desiring only his art — self-devoted, the world-forgetting. The fire of his genius burns as calmly, sweetly, and brightly as ever ; the creations of his pencil come forth more soft, delicate, gentle, and tender, than in his youth, his muse grows more musical in voice and more spiritual in fancy ; and his conversation, without losing any of the enchantment which his courteous modesty, ethereal gaiety, and potent imagination have ever shed over it, grows deeper and sweeter with the holy fervor of spiritual philosophy, — whose first full expression,

perhaps, was in the divine Beatrice; but whose last intimation of immortality is in the breathing Rosalie, as she reveries upon

“the strain of him who stole  
In music to her soul.

But what is most beautiful in him, is, that ever new magnanimity of spirit which is to the moral what the fine arts are to the aesthetic in man. It is refreshing to look through the “Lives of the Artists,” and see how transcendantly he is above every species of littleness; how free he is from exaggeration of himself; how truly he is the fosterer of genius; how he always appreciates what is meritorious under whatever shadows; what points of light are his interviews with all the artists, in their darkly shadowed career! There is something divinely parental in his influence. Greenough expresses it beautifully: “Allston,” says he, “taught me first how to discriminate — how to think — how to feel. Before I knew him, I felt strongly but blindly as it were; and if I should never pass mediocrity, I should attribute it to my absence from him. So adapted did he seem to kindle and enlighten me, making me no longer myself, but, as it were, an emanation of his own soul.”

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We began with speaking of our Artist as a worthy pupil of Michael Angelo, and from what we have said of both, it will be obvious why we so consider him. There is not the slightest resemblance in their works, yet it is evident that they have the same idea of Art. They both believe it to be the projected Spirit of Man; not merely or chiefly the experience of his spirit, but its possible future, and that its true purpose is to raise man above his present self into the heavenly being which he is destined to be. They think with the old English poet that

“Unless above himself he can  
Erect himself, — how mean a thing is man!”

It is Allston's praise, that in this high flight he is not erratic or monstrous. It is not an unhealthy excitement of that single principle in man which binds the finite to the infinite, but the elevation of his whole nature in harmony with that principle, which gives to his imagination its characteristics; and so that there is nothing astray from Nature in his most ideal productions. He often takes the most ordinary nature as the urn from which he intends to overflow us with delight; and it seems to be a triumph he covets, to show that beauty may radiate from forms which are not according to classic rule, that is, which are deficient in those exact curves and that symmetry, which, in God's works, as we daily see, are not essential to a perfect and full effect.

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Allston perfectly understands what Genius must do for itself. By patient industry it must master the details of nature. By many sided cultivation it must guide, if not enrich, the imagination, whose energy would otherwise destroy its own beauty. And by elevating the tone of his spirit by means of holy and beautiful virtues, by a magnanimity which enjoys the genius of others as much as its own, by an ever-increasing devotion to the nobly conceived Inspirer of all spiritual gifts, and by giving, in a love which casteth out fear, free scope to every endowment of his nature, in a free range through every mansion of his Father's house, — the Artist must himself become the masterpiece, which the Creator of Men had in his idea when he breathed into him a living soul.























































